DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 274 CS 511 714

TITLE	Marking Guidelines for Writing. The National Literacy Strategy.
INSTITUTION	Department for Education and Skills, London (England).
PUB DATE	2001-05-00
NOTE	18p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/midbins/literacy/Marking_guidelines.PDF.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	British National Curriculum; *Childrens Writing; Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; Guidelines; *Literacy; Tests; *Writing Evaluation; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	*National Literacy Strategy (England); Writing Contexts

ABSTRACT

Teaching modeling, sharing, tutoring, and working with children on their writing has been explored in England's recent National Literacy Strategy publications. These guidelines, produced in collaboration with Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), suggest ways of analyzing children's writing to obtain more diagnostic information about either an individual's or groups of children's writing. This guideline approach encourages identification of strengths and weaknesses at a detailed level. The guidelines document is divided into the following parts: Marking Individual Pieces of Writing; Findings from English Tests 2000; Analysing Children's Writing; Using the Analyses; The Writing Analysis Sheet; and Children's Non Fiction Writing Analysed. The Writing Analysis Sheet can be used and adapted by classroom teachers. (NKA)

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ED 472 274

The National
Literacy *Strategy*

Guidance

Curriculum & Standards

Primary Headteachers & Teachers

Status: Recommended

Date of issue: May 2001

Marking guidelines for writing

Related documents:

Target statements for writing
(www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/literacy)

Grammar for writing
(DfEE 0107/2000)

Developing early writing
(DfEE 0055/2001)

Contents

2 Marking individual pieces of writing

4 Findings from English tests 2000

5 Analysing children's writing

6 Using the analyses

8 The writing analysis sheet

13 Children's non fiction writing analysed

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Marking individual pieces of writing

Reading and responding to children's written work is vital because their writing gives evidence of using language imaginatively and constructively to make meaning using the conventions of writing at word, sentence and text level.

Teacher modelling, sharing, tutoring and working with children on their writing has been explored in the recent National Literacy Strategy publications, *Grammar for writing* designed for teachers of children in Key Stage 2, and *Developing early writing* which supports teachers in the Reception Year of Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Often teaching the objectives at word and sentence level involves focusing on the detail of how words are constructed or spelled, and on how sentences can be organised for different effects. These are complementary to text level objectives about the conventions and structures of different texts.

During the process of writing, discussion helps children to understand the decisions writers make and how they can develop and extend their writing skills. This guidance focuses on what can be done when the children have completed a piece of writing and the teacher has an opportunity to assess what they have achieved.

When children are asked to put together a longer piece of writing it is possible to see how well they can orchestrate their word and sentence knowledge alongside developing aspects of content, textual organisation and adaptation to purpose and reader. This shows how independent their learning is and so how secure it is.

Target setting – both for the curriculum and for individual or groups of pupils – helps to focus and prioritise teaching. One of the main purposes of marking writing once it has been completed is to assess how far curriculum and individual targets have been met. The National Literacy Strategy publication, *Target statements for writing*, was distributed to headteachers at the 'Leading On Literacy' conferences held in all LEAs during the Autumn of 2000 and Spring 2001. It sets out an illustrative set of targets for each year from YR to Y6 in different aspects of writing which can form the basis of more focused curriculum targets for classes and for groups of children.

When **reading** children's writing you need to be alert to:

- has the child understood the task and responded appropriately?
- what has the pupil positively achieved?
- is there evidence of achieving the targets set for this piece of writing?

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- are there targets which have not been achieved?
- are there any other aspects of the writing on which action might be needed?

When **responding** to children's writing you should comment on:

- the overall intention and effect of the piece, including a positive comment;
- any targets achieved;
- any targets partially achieved or still to be reached, and how to move towards them.

Joachim (age 8)

Task: Describe a beech tree, based on drawings

> Beech tree
> A beech tree is very tall and it has a thin or fat trunk. It drops lots of sticky and prickly shells which hold smooth, small beechnuts. The inside on the sticky prickly shell is smooth and white. In the winter you can see a beech tree's sticks. It looks like any other tree but in summer It looks like an umbrella at the top and a ball every where else exept the trunk of course. The trunk is normally a grey/brown sort of colour.
> On the twigs there are little pale flowers and lots of nuts. There are also lots of green shiny and dark leaves on the beech tree in the summer but in the winter its bare.

Commentary

In responding to this piece of writing, comments can focus on:

Positive achievements:

- overall, the piece covers the main aspects of the trees' appearance
- the attention to detail *'sticky, prickly shell'*, *'grey/brown'*, *'green, shiny and dark'*, shown through clusters of adjectives
- interesting comparison *'like an umbrella'*
- use of a generalisation *'looks like any other tree'*
- use of different connectives *'which'*, *'except'*, *'but'*.

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Areas for development:

The main area for further work is the organisation of information. This piece has several scattered references to summer and winter and does not collect together connected information. This prevents some relationships being made clear, including sequencing of flowers, leaves, nuts and shells. It would perhaps be possible, either with this piece or another similar one, to suggest a grid or diagram plan so that the text could be more organised.

- Ask the child what is the main idea of the description? Is it how the tree changes with the seasons? Is it the shape and structure of the tree?

Findings from English tests 2000

The patterns of performance in writing suggest features which distinguish the work of more or less accomplished writers as published in the QCA Standards reports.

Key Stage 1

Children achieving level 1 and 2C need to:

- develop their understanding of what a sentence is and recognise that both full stops and capital letters are required to demarcate sentences;
- extend their sentence patterns by using connectives other than and, in order to increase the precision of their writing;
- use adjectives and adverbs to add detail about qualities and circumstances.

Children achieving level 2B need to:

- give more thought to planning the endings of narratives in ways that link to the openings;
- expand points in narrative sentences by the use of phrases which provide details, for example of place, time, manner;
- use paragraphs to organise and structure writing in ways helpful to the reader.

Children achieving levels 2A and 3 need to:

- plan their writing from the outset and have a sense of its overall shape and direction;
- develop and expand points and episodes rather than reiterating them or adding arbitrary new ones;
- understand how variation in sentence structure and length can help to achieve emphasis and cohesion in a text as a whole;

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- secure their use of full stops and capital letters in complex sentences and develop use of commas to separate clauses.

Key Stage 2
Writing

Children achieving level 4 need to:

- maintain control of sentence structure and meaning when elaborating sentences with adjectives, phrases and subordinate clauses;
- develop more effective endings to their writing;
- use commas and other punctuation accurately in complex sentences and direct speech;
- use paragraphs to structure and link their writing, e.g. signalling logic, sequence, contrasts;
- apply knowledge of word roots and structure when spelling irregular polysyllabic words.

Children achieving level 5 need to:

- vary sentence length and structure to achieve particular effects;
- use the full range of punctuation appropriately;
- sustain an appropriate style and organisation in non narrative writing for different purposes and audiences.

Analysing children's writing

In addition to reading and responding to individual children's writing on a regular basis, these materials suggest ways of analysing children's writing to obtain more diagnostic information about either individual's or groups of children's writing. The approach encourages identification of strengths and weaknesses at a detailed level.

The process of analysis is supported by a sheet to be filled in (see page 10). It is divided into 2 main sections:

- Grammar: significant features at word and sentence level;
- Organisation and effect: significant whole text features.

You are invited to make judgements about the effectiveness of a writer's use of specific features, e.g. the types of sentences used and the choice of words within them. These judgements enable you to pinpoint some of the reasons why a piece

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of writing seems to be successful (or not). This, in turn, helps to guide next steps in teaching for individuals or groups of children.

The process draws on the mark scheme for writing in the Key Stage 2 tests and the writing assessment record for Key Stage 1 tasks. The analysis sheet links to the evaluation of writing in the QCA Standards reports (page 4).

These guidelines include:

- ways of using the analyses to support teaching (page 6);
- suggestions for how to set about the analyses (page 8);
- examples of children's writing analysed (pages 13-16).

Using the analyses

These analyses encourage a systematic look at the writing of individuals or groups of children. The ways you decide to use the sheets depends on such factors as the number of children involved, time of year, teacher time available.

Different ways to use the analysis sheets:

- at the start of a year, teachers could use the sheets to get a quick sense of what their children can do by looking at overall patterns, e.g. an audit of word choice or variation within sentences;
- the teacher or the Teaching Assistant can take a sample of a particular group of children – boys, girls, EAL pupils – to make an assessment of the group profile, e.g. noting particular strengths and weakness;
- analysis of several pieces of work by one child to decide on specific teaching needed;
- a whole year group or school could undertake the same writing task and the results analysed. Alternatively, the analysis could be done at the end of a teaching unit;

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- across a whole year group, teachers working with the literacy co-ordinator could look in more detail at work judged to be just short of a target level, and compile a list of critical features to inform teaching.

Having completed some analyses, the information can be used to:

- clarify task-setting, building on aspects rated as 'partially effective'. This could be linked with NLS objectives, revisiting or moving forward;
- devise child-friendly personal targets for writing;
- contribute to a more detailed knowledge of features which can be looked for in different pieces of writing;
- make links with children's reading through analysing a section of a text, to assess the suitability of a text as a model for writing.

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The writing analysis sheet

The basis of the suggestions is a sheet which identifies aspects of children's writing which are crucial to progress and, particularly, to moving writing from level 3 to level 4. The sheet does not include spelling and handwriting.

The analysis sheet suggests four headings: sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, organisation and effect.

Each of these is subdivided and, to complete the sheet, you are asked to make a judgement about whether the features are used effectively, partially effectively or not used.

We suggest the following process, which applies the analysis to a single piece of writing:

1. **Quickly read the writing for a sense of what it is about and an overall impression of how well it responds to the task set.**

2. **Decide which aspects of the analysis are most relevant/useful to you.**

   This varies depending on the age of the child (e.g. you may not expect Y2 children to be writing very complex sentences, but you may be interested in their use of adjectives) and to the nature of the task (e.g. some descriptions may contain little variation in verbs, but noun groups may be more significant).

3. **Starting with the aspects identified in no. 2, read through the writing again. Notice the frequency, variety and appropriacy of the use of the selected aspect.**

   For example, are there many adjectives? Do they vary in terms of specificity/generality, common/uncommon? Do they fit in terms of formality/informality, technical/untechnical?

4. **Make a judgement about the effectiveness of the use of this aspect and tick one of the yes / no / partial columns.**

   For example, in an explanation, attempts to join ideas using *'when'* or *'after'* rather than using *'because'* or *'as a result'*, suggests that the writer has some idea of subordination, but is not confident in using a range of subordinators. This would result in a tick in the 'Partial' column.

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5. **Where the analysis has included most aspects on the sheet, look at the patterns of use emerging from columns.**
   For example, in a piece of writing there may be evidence of complex sentence construction but only partial grasp of punctuation to mark clauses. There may also be effective appeal to the reader, but little development of content and only partial use of paragraphing.

6. **Look for connections between the different aspects** (in the last example, long rambling sentences and unclear paragraph divisions may work together), **before deciding what to tackle first.**

7. **Identify an opportunity in teaching to:**
   - **revisit and extend understanding and use of those aspects in the 'Partial' column**
   - **focus clearly on any aspects in the 'No' column**

   If using the sheet for analysing several pieces of writing, look for patterns across the writing as well as within one piece. You can use one sheet to record judgements on several pieces of writing.

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Writing analysis sheet

Grammar Significant features at word and sentence level	Judgement of effective use **Yes**	**No**	**Partial**
Sentence structure			
simple sentences			
complex sentences			
variation within sentences			
co-ordination			
subordination			
Word choice			
noun groups			
verb choice			
tense			
adjectives			
adverbs			
pronouns			
Punctuation used to demarcate			
sentences			
clauses			
phrases			
words in lists			
direct speech			
Organisation and effect Significant whole text features			
appeal to reader			
development of topic, content, theme			
openings and closings			
organisation and length of paragraphs			
presentation and layout			

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To help you make judgements here are notes on each section.

Grammar Significant features at word and sentence level	
Sentence structure	
simple sentences complex sentences	This focuses on the control of meaning through the accurate construction of clauses and phrases and their organisation into sentences. Complex sentences are used to show links and relationships between information and ideas, not just to report them straightforwardly in simple sentences. An important development in children's writing is when they use simple sentences for effect alongside complex ones.
variation within sentences	This heading includes a number of possibilities. It can be used to note the use of different sentence types (statement, question, command). It may also be important to recognise that children can vary the order of the clauses and phrases in the sentence (e.g. not always starting with the subject or a personal pronoun).
co-ordination subordination	The control of subordination in sentences is an important marker of progress in writing. By level 4 children should be using various types of subordinated clauses (time, reason, purpose, place, etc.). They should also be able to write co-ordinated sentences which are correctly organised, not just a series of statements spliced together with commas.
Word choice	
noun groups	Building noun groups to give more detail and to foreground the subject is important, particularly in non-fiction writing. In narrative, expression is more likely to come after the noun in adjectival or adverbial phrases/ clauses.
verb choice	This includes the use of a range of verbs in narrative to add precision. In non-fiction the correct use of *be* and *have* is important. The use of modal verbs enables a writer to make suggestions, offer possibilities or to speculate about consequences and effects.
tense	Consistency of tense is important to keep the reader on track but, consistency may involve using both past and present in a piece to signal different time frames or importance.
adjectives adverbs	Here it is useful to consider the nature and appropriacy of the adjectives and adverbials used, and how far they are integral to the piece. Effective use of adjectives and adverbs involves being specific, not just adding emphasis (such as, *very, a lot, really*).
pronouns	Pronouns are important in indicating the point of view of the writer and in achieving cohesion across a piece of writing by substituting for nouns.
Punctuation used to demarcate	
sentences clauses phrases words in lists	The categories here are self-explanatory. It is worth remembering that, as children write more complex sentences, they need to ensure that their use of punctuation clarifies meaning within sentences and does not solely demarcate sentence boundaries.
direct speech	The punctuation of direct speech is complicated and, at level 4, moves beyond simply the use of inverted commas.

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Organisation and effect Significant whole text features	
appeal to reader	This can be shown in a wide variety of ways, which vary with the type of writing and the purpose. It may include direct address to the reader, but more important is the inclusion of detail to inform and entertain. It includes the use of more formal styles and registers where appropriate.
development of topic, content, theme	This refers to the way the topic or content of non fiction is handled, including how it is developed or used as a basis for generalisation or specificity. In narrative this includes the development of plot, setting, character or ideas. Development may be traced through a sequence of sentences and how paragraphs relate to each other.
openings and closings	The early sentences of any piece are very important in announcing the subject or theme and in setting tone (e.g. using a formal register). Unless the ending is planned in advance, the closings of many pieces are either formulaic or haphazard. Good closing sentences refer back to the opening in some way to give a sense of completion. This is a particularly important skill in achieving the control associated with level 4 and above.
organisation and length of paragraphs	Organisation within paragraphs, so that the main idea is clear and other detail develops it, produces logical and well ordered writing. Clearly signalled links between paragraphs are important in achieving an overall coherent piece.
presentation and layout	The use of headings, subheadings and other devices to make structure clear is part of overall coherence. They are likely to be significant in non fiction texts.

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Children's non fiction writing analysed

Jenny (age 11)

Task: Write a letter to the council

> Dear Council Leader
> There is a lot of rubbish on Park Hill Flat's and nothing has been done. It is not just rubbish but DRUGS and the lack of amount that is being done about it. I demand that something is done. Let's put the boot on the other foot for if it was you that lived on the flat's you would immediately do something. One solution is you collect a bit of money to tidy up. A group of children may want to help. There are a lot of people that suffer. The lifts smell and sometimes do not work. PLEASE HELP!
>
> Yours faithfully

Grammar	Judgement of effective use		
Significant features at word and sentence level	**Yes**	**No**	**Partial**
Sentence structure			
simple sentences	✓		
complex sentences			
variation within sentences	✓		
co-ordination	✓		
subordination			✓
Word choice			
noun groups			✓
verb choice			✓
tense	✓		
adjectives		✓	
adverbs		✓	
pronouns	✓		
Punctuation used to demarcate			
sentences	✓		
clauses		✓	
phrases			
words in lists			
direct speech			
Organisation and effect			
Significant whole text features			
appeal to reader	✓		
development of topic, content, theme			✓
openings and closings			✓
organisation and length of paragraphs		✓	
presentation and layout	✓		

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Explanation of judgements

sentence structure	There is evidence of a range of sentences with a variety of structures. The openings to the sentences are varied effectively: *'There is'*, *'I demand'*, *'One solution'*. The sentences are mostly short but some are used to good effect *'I demand that something is done.'* Co-ordination (*'and'*) is used in the first two and last sentences. There is some evidence of subordination (*'for'*) but the second half of the piece includes a series of shorter sentences which need to be organised to show relationships between them, such as joining *'there are a lot of people that suffer'* with *'the lifts smell ...'* Tackling subordination here would help with the organisation of ideas.
word choice	Tenses are largely managed successfully (*'There is a lot of rubbish ... nothing has been done.'*) pronouns are used effectively in the appeal *'I demand'*, *'you collect'*. There is no significant evidence of use of adjectives and adverbs. There are noun groups, but the adverbials within them lack variety – *'a lot of rubbish'*, *'a bit of money'*, *'a group of children'*. The piece would achieve even greater impact if these noun groups were precisely specified. The verb *'is'* is pervasive and could be helpfully varied, for example, the first sentence could begin *'Rubbish clutters the ...'*
punctuation	The demarcation of sentences is not completely accurate, but there is plenty of evidence of the correct use of full stops and capital letters. Since there is little in terms of complex sentences there is no evidence of punctuation within the sentences, although apostrophes are inserted wrongly.
whole text features	The piece has a direct and firm appeal to the reader and the use of capitals for *'DRUGS'* and *'PLEASE HELP'* shows understanding of using presentational features for effect. The subject matter is sequenced: • statement of problem • need for something to be done • suggestions for what could be done • but then re-states some of the problems before the final appeal. The development of the content could be improved. As a letter, it begins rather abruptly and the ending, whilst clear, is also rather sudden.
Implications	This piece has a clear purpose and the formality is appropriate to the intended reader. The areas most fruitful for development are those ticked as 'partial' in the table, where Jenny shows some, but not full, understanding of how language can be used for effect. The next targets for Jenny could be: • subordination • noun groups • verb choices • structure and organisation, including development of content and opening/closing.

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Zoe (age 10)

Task: Letter to a museum information service, asking for help in identifying a mystery creature

Dear information service
Will you please identify this creature for me?
It has yellow eyes red skin and blue feet. I was amazed when I found it and I picked it up, It started rolling around on its back and running around in circles, when it walks it uses all 4 legs thats the only thing whats not unusual about it. Whats realy strange is that it eats paper and rubber.
Then I got realy excited when I saw it sit on his bum and pick up the paper with its legs and started eating.

When it had finished a loud noise come out of its mouth, I think it was a burp but I can't be sure.

After that I was watching it ever so carefully when I saw it sit up again so I gave it some paper because I thought it was hungry, but it just threw it on the floor, I wondered what was the matter with it, then it came running up my arm and laid on my shoulder.

I've looked in encyclopedias, but I couldn't find anything like it so thats why Im writing to you. Please try your hardest to find out what it is.
Also it is very fat and heavy.

Yours sencerely

Grammar	Judgement of effective use		
Significant features at word and sentence level	Yes	No	Partial
Sentence structure			
simple sentences			
complex sentences			✓
variation within sentences			✓
co-ordination			
subordination			✓
Word choice			
noun groups		✓	
verb choice			✓
tense	✓		
adjectives			✓
adverbs			✓
pronouns	✓		

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Punctuation used to demarcate			
sentences			✓
clauses		✓	
phrases			
words in lists			
direct speech			
Organisation and effect			
Significant whole text features			
appeal to reader			✓
development of topic, content, theme			✓
openings and closings			✓
organisation and length of paragraphs			✓
presentation and layout	✓		

Explanation of judgements

sentence structure	Many of the sentences are complex, using *'when', 'then', 'but', 'so'*, but they are not always secure, as in the third sentence *'I was amazed ... about it.'* The penultimate paragraph consists of a single sentence which is a series of statements without appropriate shaping, despite the sequence *'After that ...when ... so ... because ... but ...'*. This incomplete control of sentence structure gives the piece a vagueness and lack of shape.
word choices	The initial description of colours is followed by a long account of things the creature did. Opportunities are missed to describe how it moves or further physical features. Much greater precision would be appropriate in this letter and more effective use of adjectives and adverbs would help.
punctuation	The demarcation of sentences is insecure and the comma splice is used more than once, and other punctuation is sometimes used where full stops should come. Sentences addressed to the information service are clear, but control is lost when describing the creature's actions.
whole text features	This writing shows a potential understanding of many features of textual organisation. The opening sentence and the ending (before the last sentence) are appropriate, but the development of the content is organised chronologically rather than by topic turning it into a recount rather than a description. The paragraphing suggests an incomplete grasp of how best to group ideas together since, apart from two, the paragraphs are one sentence only.
Implications	This writer has a partial grasp of a number of different areas of writing, but seems secure in relatively few areas. Work is needed on complex sentence structures and on paragraph and whole text organisation.

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London SW1P 3BT

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